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**PARENTING COMPLEXITY AND RELATIONSHIP QUALITY AMONG
YOUNG ADULTS**

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Parenting Complexity and Relationship Quality among Young Adults

ABSTRACT

The well documented diversity of American family life has led to complex parenting responsibilities that extend beyond the traditional configuration of two parents raising their shared biological children within their household. We investigated the influence of self-reports of parenting complexity (only shared, only non-shared, and both shared and non-shared children) on relationship satisfaction, relationship uncertainty, verbal conflict, and physical aggression. Respondents included 500 young adults in different-sex marital and cohabiting unions (Toledo Adolescent Relationships Study). Contrary to expectations, we found that individuals in relationships with non-shared children did not, on average, report lower relationship quality than their counterparts with only shared children. While relationship strains (finances, time, trust) were associated with relationship quality, they did not mediate associations between parenting complexity and relationship quality. Our findings speak to measurement and theoretical issues that may guide future research on parenting complexity.

Parenting Complexity and Indicators of Relationship Quality among Young Adults

Reflecting recent shifts in the stability of intimate relationships and the more variable contexts in which childbearing occurs, men and women forming families in the contemporary U.S. context often have complex parenting biographies. Researchers have begun to examine complex parenting in terms of the prevalence of intimate relationships with partners who have children from prior unions (non-shared children) as well as the subset with children from more than one partner (multiple partner fertility) (e.g., Cancian, Meyer, and Cook 2011; Guzzo 2014; Manning, Brown, and Stykes 2014; Schoen, Landale, and Daniels 2007; Stewart 2007; Ventura 2009). For example, one-third of young adult cohabiting mothers and 12% of young adult married mothers were living with non-shared children (children from prior relationships) (Brown and Bulanda 2008). Further, 12% of young adult women and 38% of young adult mothers of two or more children reported multiple partner fertility (their children do not share the same biological father) (Guzzo 2014). Although young adult parenting biographies often include children from prior relationships (non-shared children), little attention has focused on the implications for the nature and quality of these relationships.

Drawing on contemporary data (2011-2012) from the Toledo Adolescent Relationships Study (TARS) and a stress framework, we assessed whether and how parenting complexity is associated with relationship quality. An advantage of these data is that parenting complexity can be distinguished on the basis of either or both partners having biological children with (a) prior marital, cohabiting, or sexual partners (non-shared parenting) or (b) only with current partners (shared-only parenting). Although prior research has focused on multiple partner fertility (MPF), which by definition involves families with at least two children, MPF is only one component of

parenting complexity. A contribution of this study is to more broadly conceptualize parenting complexity as well as to determine whether parenting complexity is associated with relationship problems. Specifically, we assess whether parenting complexity is associated with a range of relationship outcomes including satisfaction, uncertainty about the future, physical aggression, and verbal conflict, and consider how stress might mediate parenting complexity and indicators of relationship quality.

BACKGROUND

Although the vast majority of Americans become parents, it is a stressful transition requiring intense investments in time, economic, psychological, and physical resources. Research comparing parents and non-parents indicates that often poorer relationship quality is associated with parenthood (Evenson and Simon 2005; Nomaguchi and Milkie 2003). Prior research needs to be expanded as the experience of parenthood has become more complex with decreasing shares of biological parents raising their children together (Guzzo 2014). A major shortcoming in the literature on complex parenting is that researchers often do not operationalize the mechanisms by which parenting complexity may have implications for a wide range of relational outcomes.

Pearlin and colleagues' (1981) stress model provides a conceptual framework to investigate whether, and why, complex parenting patterns may put young men and women at risk for poorer quality relationships as evidenced by lower satisfaction, greater uncertainty, and more verbal and physical conflict. This model includes three conceptual domains: (1) sources of stress (e.g., parenting complexity); (2) mediators of stress (e.g., time, finances, trust); and (3) manifestations of stress (e.g., indicators of quality), and suggests that outcomes such as conflict

are intrinsically related to role strains, and that the availability of resources amplify or diminish such strains.

A number of studies (e.g., Evenson and Simon 2005; Nomaguchi and Milkie 2003; Stewart 2007) have focused on the first domain and have implicated parenthood as a source of stress. Nomaguchi and Milkie (2003), for example, argued that although parenthood can be rewarding it can also be psychologically costly because of increased conflicts and frustrations, which lead to feelings of stress. Evenson and Simon (2005) found that parental status increased men and women's depressive symptoms. Stewart (2007) as well as Shapiro and Stewart (2011) emphasized that step-parenting is especially stressful as step-parenthood requires defining and maintaining relatively unclear and variable roles and relationships. Alternatively, it may not be the case that parenting non-biological children affects quality. Findings from the Three-City Study suggested that although 78% of the mothers had been or were involved in multiple partner fertility unions, nearly 90% indicated that they did not co-parent their partners' children from other unions (Burton and Hardaway 2012). Thus, in this sample of disadvantaged mothers co-parenting of non-shared children, does not appear to be common, and may mean that having non-shared children does not have consequences for relationship quality outcomes. Perhaps the levels of involvement in non-shared children conditions the implications of non-shared children on relationship quality.

Other researchers have emphasized the second conceptual domain, mediators of stress, such as financial resources (Brody et al. 1994), issues of trust (Burton 2014), and time constraints (Umberson, Pudrovska, and Reczek 2010). Financial strains, for example, were associated with lower relationship quality, more verbal conflict as well as intimate partner violence among young adults (Copp 2014). Similarly issues of trust or lack thereof were

associated with lower quality relationships (Longmore et al. 2014), as well as partner aggression (Kaufman et al. 2014). Parents who raise children from different relationships may be somewhat more economically disadvantaged and face financial issues in terms of payment and receipt of child support (Stewart 2007). Concerns about trusting the partner around the opposite sex tend to characterize unions with non-shared children (Burton 2014; Cancian et al. 2011; Carlson, McLanahan, and England 2004; Taylor et al. 2011). Another source of strain, time constraints, may be more prevalent in families with non-shared children as parents negotiate relationships with their children's other biological parent (Monte 2007). Challenges in managing financial and personal relationships with ex-partners (relationship baggage) may be stressful as ex-partners may be viewed as threats to current relationships.

Many studies emphasize the third component of the stress model: outcomes of stress (e.g., Leisring 2013; Roberts et al. 2011; Stith et al. 2004). Researchers have demonstrated that stress, irrespective of its source, is often manifested in lower quality relationships as well as increased odds of intimate partner violence. Additionally, Brown and Bulanda (2008) and Brownridge (2004) reported that individuals residing with non-shared children had increased odds of intimate partner violence. Thus, each of these three domains (sources, mediators, and outcomes) of the stress model have been extensively studied separately, but to our knowledge have not been combined and applied to parenting complexity, relational strain, and indicators of relationship quality.

Another line of inquiry related to complex parenting and relationship quality is the possibility of selection processes. For example, compared with urban parents with shared children, for example, mothers' with multiple partner fertility did not report lower relationship quality (Carlson and Furstenberg 2007). Carlson and Furstenberg (2007) have argued that there

may be selection processes operating such that individuals do not enter into relationships where non-shared children are present unless they are willing to take on some level of responsibility for parenting someone else's children. Empirical analyses documented that men who were involved with their nonresident children and had more pro-child attitudes were more likely to form new unions (Goldscheider and Sassler 2006; Stewart, Manning, and Smock 2003). This view is also consistent with the notion of a "relationship learning curve" (Giordano et al. forthcoming), such that individuals bring the lessons learned in their past relationships to their current relationships. Individuals who have had children with prior partners may have learned some ways to successfully manage and navigate relationships. Thus, individuals with prior relationship experience (by definition those with non-shared children) may have more realistic relationship expectations than their counterparts in their first coresidential relationship.

Current Investigation

Drawing on data from the 2011-2012 Toledo Adolescent Relationships Study (TARS, n = 500), we assessed whether parenting complexity was related to relationship strains and indicators of quality for married and cohabiting young adults. We began by establishing the levels of parenting complexity. Although other data sets focus on respondents' parental status, we rely on respondents' reports of their own and partners' parental status to determine whether either member of the couple have children from a prior relationship. These data offer a unique opportunity to assess the implications of complex parenting by focusing on both respondents, and their partners, parental status. Large data sets, such as the Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health), are not able to ascertain as complete a measure of parenting complexity. The Add Health can be used to determine multiple partner fertility among women, but the data do not establish whether respondents' partners have non-residential children from

other partners. This is a serious drawback for assessments of parenting complexity for couples and specifically men because men's children with other partners typically do not reside with them. Only a few population-based data sources, such as the TARS, include direct measurement of non-residential children for both respondent and partner as well as a range of indicators of relationship quality.

In this study, we controlled for other known correlates of young adults' relationship satisfaction, verbal conflict, physical conflict and family complexity including current relationship characteristics, such as union status and sociodemographic characteristics. We hypothesized that respondents with complex parenting (i.e., respondents with non-shared children) would report the lowest relationship satisfaction, and the highest levels of relationship uncertainty as well as verbal and physical conflict. Additionally, we expected that parenting complexity would influence relationship satisfaction and conflict, in part, through relational strains; thus, we anticipated that including these strains in the analyses would attenuate the effect of family complexity on young adults' relationship functioning. Alternatively, we recognized that selection processes may be operating and complex parenting may not be associated with negative relationship dynamics. Building on research demonstrating gender differences in the meaning of parenthood (e.g., Monte 2011; Nomaguchi and Milkie 2003) and multiple partner fertility (Carlson and Furstenberg 2007), we also examined whether the effects of parenting complexity differed for women and men.

Finally, we establish whether respondents or partners who reported that non-shared children caused problems in their relationship experienced lower relationship quality. The TARS included a direct question that asked the respondent's views about the implications of non-shared children on their relationship. Among this subset of respondents who have complex parenting,

we determined whether reports of relationship problems were associated with lower relationship quality.

METHOD

Data

The TARS data focus on dating and sexual relationships during the transition from adolescence to adulthood. The initial data (n=1,321) were from a stratified, random sample of adolescents who registered for the 7th, 9th, and 11th grades in Lucas County, Ohio, in the year 2000. We interviewed respondents during years 2001, 2002, 2004, 2006, and 2011-2012. Because we interviewed outside of the school setting, respondents did not need to attend classes to be in the original study. At the fifth interview there were 1,021 respondents, or 77.6% of the initial survey. Respondents were young adults (ages 22-29, with a mean age of 25), and the interviews were conducted largely in person (72%) with the remaining conducted online. The advantages of these data are that they include detailed measures of relationship quality and direct questions about shared and non-shared parenting along with detailed relationship and fertility histories. The analytic sample consisted of 500 respondents in different-sex married and cohabiting relationships who reported their race as Black, Hispanic, or White.

Dependent Measures

Relationship satisfaction (Rust et al. 1986), assessed at the fifth interview, included likert responses to the following eight items: (1) “I really appreciate his/her sense of humor”; (2) “He/she doesn’t seem to listen to me” (reverse coded); (3) “We both seem to like the same things”; (4) “I often have second thoughts about our relationship” (reverse coded); (5) “I enjoy just sitting and talking with him/her”; (6) “We become competitive when we have to make decisions” (reverse coded); (7) “I wish there was more warmth and affection between us”

(reverse coded); and (8) “He/she is always correcting me” (reverse coded). Responses were (5) strongly agree to (1) strongly disagree ($\alpha = .82$).

Relationship uncertainty included three items about the future stability of the relationship: Two items asked respondents how strongly they disagreed (1) or agreed (5) with the statements, “I may not want to be with him [her] in a few years,” and “I feel uncertain about our prospects to make this relationship work for a lifetime.” The third item asked respondents “how often they seriously considered ending their relationship” with responses ranging from never (1) to very often (5) ($\alpha = .88$).

Physical conflict, measured at the fifth interview, included responses to twelve items from the revised Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS2) (Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, and Sugarman 1996). These included how often the respondent had done the following: (1) “thrown something at”; (2) “twisted arm or hair”; (3) “used a knife or gun”; (4) “punched or hit with something that could hurt”; (5) “choked”; (6) “slammed against a wall”; (7) “beat up”; (8) “burned or scalded on purpose”; (9) “kicked”; (10) “pushed, shoved, or grabbed”; (11) “slapped in the face or head with an open hand”; and (12) “hit” in reference to experiences with the current/most recent partner. Responses ranged from (1) never to (5) very often; due to skewness we recoded the variable as any violence (1) and no violence (0) ($\alpha = .93$).

Verbal conflict, measured at the fifth interview, included responses to three items. These included how often the respondent and the respondent’s partner had: (1) “disagreements or arguments”; (2) “yelled or shouted at each other”; and (3) “disagreements about your relationship,” and responses ranged from (1) never to (5) very often ($\alpha = .89$).

Non-Shared Parenting Relationship Problems

Respondents who reported having non-shared children, were asked whether they had relationship problems based on non-shared parenting. The following question was asked of respondents who had a child with someone other than the current partner: “My relationship(s) with the father(s) [mother(s)] of my children cause(s) problems in my relationship with [name1].” A similar question was asked of respondents whose partners had a child with someone else. The response categories ranged on a five point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Independent Measures

Relationship parenting complexity, was based on questions about the respondent’s own experience and the partner’s experience. The question asked the following: Do you have children with someone other than X?” Response categories included: (1) “I don’t have any children”; (2) “I have a child with him/her”; (3) “I have a child, but not with him/her”; (4) “I have a child with both him/her and someone else.” Further, the fertility histories included a query asking whether the respondent had a child with anyone besides the father/mother of the child. We combined these questions to establish a relationship based measure of whether the couple had no children, only shared children, only non-shared children, and non-shared and shared children. To assess the value of the relationship oriented indicator, we also created an indicator based on the respondent’s own fertility with the same response categories: no children, only shared children, and any non-shared children. A final measure was based on respondents with two or more children and measured whether the respondent had multiple partner fertility.

Financial, time, and trust strains were measured separately. *Financial strains*, based on five items, assessed how concerned respondents were with (1) their standard of living, (2) not having enough money, (3) having a dead-end job, (4) not living up to potential, and (5)

financially struggling ($\alpha = .82$). *Trust strains*, based on two items, asked about respondents' trust of partners around the opposite sex, and partners' trust when respondents were around the opposite sex ($\alpha = .76$). *Time strains* asked whether respondents liked how partners spent their time and managed everyday life, and were coded so that higher values reflected greater strains ($\alpha = .77$).

Control Measures

Gender, a dichotomous variable, indicated whether the respondent was female. *Age* was coded as a continuous variable. *Race/ethnicity* consisted of three self-reported categories: White (reference group), Black, and Hispanic. *Union status*, based on relationship histories, included dating, cohabiting, and married. *Current relationship* indicated that respondents reported on their current versus most recent relationship. *Education* was classified with four categories: less than 12 years, 12 years, some college, and college graduate.

Analytic Strategy

Table 1 included descriptive statistics for the parenting complexity indicators. Table 2 included descriptive statistics for all variables included in the multivariate models. We used these data to provide a descriptive portrait of the sample. Table 3 presented the regression models estimating relationship quality and included the demographic indicators and a separate set of models with the strain measures. Ordinary least squares regressions were estimated for all outcomes except for physical aggression, which relied on logistic regression estimates. We estimated models that included gender interactions of parenting complexity. Table 4 is limited to respondents in relationships with parenting complexity (non-shared children) and estimates the association with stated problems with non-shared children and relationship quality.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows that 38% of married and cohabiting respondents reported no children in their relationship (neither partner/spouse had children), 31% had only shared children, 13% had only non-shared children, and 12% had both shared and non-shared children. Thus, about one-third (31%) of respondents were in a relationship where one partner had a non-shared child (Table 1). In the second column we limited the distribution to respondents have a child in their relationship (child of respondent and/or partner) and half had non-shared children. There is a nearly even split between those who have only non-shared and both shared and non-shared. The respondents in relationships with both shared and non-shared children represent a type of multiple partner fertility (at least one member of the couple has children with more than one mother/father). As discussed above, these indicators reflected parenting complexity within the relationship and were not individual based indicators. To illustrate the value of the relationship based measure we contrast it to an individual based measure (only respondent) of parenting complexity. The individual measure indicated that 44% of married and cohabiting respondents have no children, 39% have only shared children and 17% have any non-shared children. Among respondents with children, 30% have a non-shared child. The individual indicator is limited because about 13% of respondents without children have a partner with children. Accordingly, we focus on the relational indicator rather than the individual measure.

In the second panel we focused specifically on multiple partner fertility. Among couples who have a child, over one-quarter have multiple partner fertility – this includes the shared and non-shared above as well as couples in which one partner has children with multiple partners. Again, to illustrate the value of the relationship based measure of parenting complexity, we present the individual measure of multiple partner fertility. The individual based measure indicates that only one-fifth had multiple partner fertility. The average number of children among

respondents with children was 1.76 (range 0-6) reflecting that although parenthood is somewhat normative, individuals differed in their number of children (results not shown). This further demonstrates that an indicator of multiple partner fertility would include a rather limited set of young adult parents because only 26% have two or more children. Among respondents with two or more children, 38% have children with more than one partner. To best encapsulate the parenting experiences our multivariate analyses focused on a relationship based indicator of parenting complexity.

Table 2 presented the distribution of the indicators of relationship quality (satisfaction, uncertainty, verbal conflict, physical aggression), non-shared child relationship problems, relationship strains (financial, trust, and time) and sociodemographic variables for each of the parenting complexity indicators. The levels of relationship quality were similar across the parenting indicators with marginally higher rates of partner violence among respondents with non-shared children (results not shown). The strains were similar across parenting measures with marginally higher levels of financial and trust strains among couples with non-shared children (results not shown). The level of endorsement with the statement that non-shared children cause relationship problems was mid-range with a mean score of 2.5. One-quarter (24.5%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. The levels of agreement were higher among those with only non-shared children and lower among those with both shared and non-shared children. From the point of view of respondents themselves, and in response to direct questions, a substantial minority of respondents in these complex families indicated that relationships with the parents of non-shared children caused relationship problems.

Regarding sociodemographic characteristics, higher concentrations of Whites respondents reported that they had only shared children, greater shares of Hispanic respondents

reported only non-shared, and greater shares of Black respondents reported shared and non-shared children. Marriage was most common among respondents with only shared and cohabitation was the most common union status (80%) for respondents who reported that they had shared and non-shared children. The education levels of respondents were highest among respondents with only shared children; 25% were college graduates and for respondents with shared and non-shared children, 13% were college graduates.

Table 3 presented multivariate models examining how parenting complexity, sociodemographic factors, and strains influenced relationship satisfaction, uncertainty, conflict, and physical aggression. We presented only one model for each outcome because the inclusion of correlates did not change the association between the parenting complexity indicator and relationship quality. Shown in the first column, complex parenting (shared and non-shared) was associated positively with relationship satisfaction. Respondents with only non-shared children reported similar relationship satisfaction as those with only shared children. The relationships strains were significantly and negatively associated with satisfaction. Parenting complexity was not associated with relationship uncertainty, suggesting that the future orientation of the relationship was not dependent on parenting configurations. Black and cohabiting respondents reported greater relationship uncertainty. Financial, trust, and time strains were all positively associated with greater uncertainty. Parenting complexity was not significantly associated with verbal conflict and the strains operated in the expected direction. The odds of experiencing physical aggression were similar for respondents with and without parenting complexity. The initial marginally significant difference at the bivariate model was explained with the inclusion of the sociodemographic variables, specifically cohabitation (results not shown). The strain indicators were positively associated with the odds of experiencing physical aggression. Finally,

gender interactions suggested that women, compared with men, with only non-shared children reported higher satisfaction and more uncertainty (results not shown). There were no gender differences in the associations between having both shared and non-shared children and relationship quality (results not shown).

Table 4 presents the regression coefficients predicting relationship quality among the subset of respondents who have non-shared children. In bivariate models (model 1) the greater the level of agreement that with the statement that non-shared children cause problems in your relationship is significantly associated with relationship quality: lower satisfaction, greater uncertainty, higher levels of conflict, and marginally greater odds of intimate partner violence. In the multivariate models presented in Table 4 beliefs about non-shared children causing problems were associated with lower satisfaction and greater conflict. Thus, there is a subset of respondents with non-shared children who report that it causes relational problems and they do experience lower levels of relationship quality.

DISCUSSION

Although rates of parenting complexity have been documented, there are only a handful of studies focusing on the implications of parenting complexity for relationship well-being. We considering a relationship based indicator of parenting complexity that accounted for children born to the respondent and their partner as well as applied a stress perspective to our analysis of relationship quality.

A contribution of our work was to examine both individual and relationship based measures of parenting complexity. Examining the measure that focused on the respondents' parental status, 30% of cohabiting or married respondents with a child reported a non-shared child. In contrast, the measure that included the respondents' reports of their own and their

partners' parental status, about half of cohabiting or married young adults with children had non-shared children. Both measurement strategies are appropriate depending on the research question. Given our focus is on relationship quality we rely on the relationship based measure that included both the respondents' and partners' parental status. Similarly, we argued for extending the discussion of family structure to include multiple partner fertility as well as parenting complexity. Multiple partner fertility is a subset of complex partnering, but by definition requires the parent to have at least two children. Although this may be an appropriate indicator, it is sometimes used as a proxy for complex parenting. Many of the parents with non-shared children will go on to form multiple partner fertility. In essence, they are the population at risk for future multiple partner fertility.

Our measure of parenting complexity may also be termed, a stepfamily. Traditionally, definitions of stepfamilies were based on the biological relationship of residential children (Stewart 2007). Several researchers including Sweeney (2010) and Stewart (2007) argue for an expanded definition of stepfamilies that include children who live outside the home. For example, nonresident fathers who form new relationships are by definition forming stepfamilies. Unfortunately, not many population-based surveys permit measurement of the expanded definition of stepfamilies as questions about both the respondent and spouse/partners children living in the home and outside the home are required. Most surveys simply collect household rosters and do not query about the spouse/partner's nonresident children. As data collections encompass broader definitions of families, the terms we use in research may be modified.

The discourse on multiple partner fertility, stepparenting, and non-shared parenting has focused on the potentially negative ramifications. Negotiating everyday life with former partners who are the parents of non-shared children can be challenging and are reflected in slightly higher

financial and trust strains. Former partners may be threatening to relationships as they present possible sexual and relationship threats and are reflected in terms used in population culture such as “baby momma drama.” Non-shared children bring with them former ‘relationship baggage’ that may interfere with the quality of the relationship. At the same time individuals who are in relationships where at least one partner has non-shared children were aware of this parental status at the time they entered into cohabitation or marriage. Thus, there may be some positive selection of individuals into relationships where one member of the couple has a child with someone else. Further, individuals who have had a non-shared child by definition have prior relationship experience and may have a positive ‘relationship learning curve.’ In other words, they have learned from their prior relationships and possibly have more realistic expectations of their relationships.

Drawing on a stress perspective we find that higher levels of stress indicators are associated with lower levels of relationship quality. Contrary to our expectations, responses to the direct questions about non-shared parenting and relationship problems revealed that on average non-shared parenting was not viewed as a source of strain in relationships. Further, inconsistent with the stress perspective parenting complexity was not associated with lower levels of relationship quality. The findings were similar across four indicators of quality and persist with or without controls for relationship strains. Our findings best aligned with a relationship learning curve or selection argument. However, there appeared to be a subset of individuals who experienced some strain based on non-shared parenting, and our study is unique in asking direct questions about this dynamic. Analyses indicated that for this subgroup parenting complexity was associated with greater stress and lower relationship quality.

Although this study extended our understanding of parenting complexity, there are a few

shortcomings. First, we did not account for the number of children in analyses. The data did not include information on the number of partner's children so we were constrained in our ability to measure the number of partner's children. Second, the analyses were cross-sectional and it would be ideal to have indicators of relationship quality at the outset of the relationship. Examining individuals as they initiate relationships would be challenging because it would require frequent data collection. Third, this was a regional sample and the findings should be replicated with a nationally representative sample. Fourth, our sample was limited to relatively young parents with young children and it possible that parenting complexity becomes more problematic as children get older and there are more demands on time and resources. Finally, prior studies focused on the importance of co-parenting non-shared children. We were not able to measure the extent of co-parenting in this study but agree that the level of involvement with non-shared children is an important factor to consider in assessments of relationship quality.

As parenting complexity becomes increasingly common we believe it is important expand our methodological and theoretical treatments of family structure to encapsulate more diverse family experiences. We anticipate that future studies will consider specific conditions under which parenting complexity increases stresses associated with lower relationship quality. Further, a central goal of new research will be to assess how parenting complexity influences a broader array of family processes and outcomes such as co-parenting, family instability and child well-being.

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Table 1. Shared Parenting and Multiple Partner Fertility (Cohabiting and Married Young Adults)

Parenting Complexity (n=500)	Total (n=500)	Parents (n=308)
Relationship Parenting Complexity		
No Children	38.4%	--
Only Shared Children	30.8%	50.0%
Only Non-Shared Children	12.6%	25.3%
Both Shared and Non-Shared Children	12.4%	24.7%
Respondent Parenting Complexity		
No Children	44.0%	--
Only Shared Children	38.8%	69.7%
Any Non-Shared Children	17.2%	30.3%
Multiple Partner Fertility		
Couple (n=308 Respondent or Partner has Child)		
No Multiple Partner Fertility		71.4%
Respondent or Partner has Multiple Partner Fertility		28.6%
Respondent (n=267 Respondent has child)		
No Respondent Multiple Partner Fertility		81.3%
Respondent Multiple Partner Fertility		18.7%
Respondent (n=129 Respondent has 2 or more children)		
No Respondent Multiple Partner Fertility		61.2%
Respondent Multiple Partner Fertility		38.8%

Source: Toledo Adolescent Relationships Study

Table 2. Distribution of Independent and Dependent Variables for Married and Cohabiting Couples with Children (N=308)

	TOTAL	Only Shared	Only Non-shared	Both Shared & Non-shared
Relationship Quality				
Satisfaction (1-5)	3.6 (0.7)	3.6	3.6	3.7
Uncertainty (1-5)	2.3 (1.4)	2.2	2.4	2.4
Conflict (1-5)	2.6 (0.9)	2.6	2.7	2.6
Physical Aggression	32.5%	27.2%	37.2%	38.2%
Strains				
Financial (1-5)	2.4 (0.9)	2.4	2.6	2.6
Trust (1-5)	3.1 (1.3)	2.9	3.3	3.1
Time (1-5)	2.6 (0.9)	2.6	2.7	2.5
Non-shared Causes				
Relationship Problems (1-5) (n=151) ^a	2.47 (1.26)	--	2.61 (1.33)	2.32 (1.19)
Sociodemographic				
Age (22-29)	25.8	25.9	25.6	25.9
Female	56.8%	54.5%	66.7%	51.3%
Race/Ethnicity				
Non-Hispanic White	61.7%	73.4%	48.7%	51.3%
Non-Hispanic Black	22.1%	12.3%	25.6%	38.1%
Hispanic	16.2%	14.3%	25.6%	10.5%
Union Status				
Married	45.8%	58.4%	46.1%	19.7%
Cohabiting	54.2%	41.5%	53.8%	80.2%
Current Relationship	90.2%	92.0%	84.0%	88.1%
Education				
Less than high school	12.3%	11.0%	14.1%	13.2%
High school	25.3%	21.4%	35.6%	22.4%
13-15	44.8%	42.2%	43.6%	51.3%
16+	17.5%	25.3%	6.4%	13.1%
N	308	154	78	76

Source: Toledo Adolescent Relationships Study

Standard deviations in parentheses

^a. Item only asked of respondents and partners with non-shared children

Table 3. Relationship Quality and Complex Parenting among Married and Cohabiting Young Adults with Children (N = 308)

	Relationship Satisfaction	Relationship Uncertainty	Verbal Conflict	Physical Aggression ^a
<i>Parenting Complexity</i>				
(Only Shared)				
Only Non-shared	0.081	0.018	-0.084	1.137
Shared and Non-shared	0.177*	0.059	-0.116	1.485
<i>Sociodemographic</i>				
Age	0.020	-0.024	0.004	0.967
Female (Male)	0.088	0.174+	0.144	1.388
Race/Ethnicity (Non-Hispanic White)				
Black	-0.067	0.368**	0.160	1.237
Hispanic	-0.111	0.064	-0.051	1.663
Cohabiting (Married)	-0.020	0.243*	0.082	1.153
Current Relationship (Prior)	0.175+	-0.194	-0.088	0.483
Education (Some College)				
Less than high school	0.013	-0.036	0.045	0.825
High School	0.123+	-0.110	-0.104	1.175
College Graduate	-0.034	0.134	0.105	0.794
<i>Strains</i>				
Financial	-0.090**	0.154**	0.152**	1.479**
Trust	-0.048*	0.094*	0.090*	1.263*
Time	-0.473***	0.730***	0.450***	1.624**

Source: Toledo Adolescent Relationships Study

Note: Reference group in parentheses

^a. All models present OLS regression coefficients except physical aggression, which presents logistic regression odds ratios.

+ p < .10 * p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

Table 4. Relationship Quality and Reported Problems with Non-Shared Children Among Married and Cohabiting Young Adults with Non-Shared Children^a (n=151)

	Relationship Satisfaction		Relationship Uncertainty		Verbal Conflict		Physical Aggression	
	Model 1	Model 2 ^b	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Non-shared causes problems	-0.202***	-0.087**	0.244***	0.014	0.269***	0.183**	1.261 ⁺	0.991

N=308 Source: Toledo Adolescent Relationships Study

Note: Reference group in parentheses

^a. All models present OLS regression coefficients except physical aggression, which presents logistic regression odds ratios.

^b. Models include age, gender, race/ethnicity, union status, education, and strains as defined in Table 3.

+ p < .10 * p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001